

February 18, 2013

RE: Written Testimony for Senate Bill 132

Doernbecher Children's
Hospital

School of Medicine

Division of Pediatric
Infectious Diseases

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Judith Guzman-Cottrill, DO
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Chair and Members of the Committee,

I am a Pediatric Infectious Disease specialist at OHSU's Doernbecher Children's Hospital. I am submitting written testimony **SUPPORTING Senate Bill 132**. If successful, SB 132 will require parents who request a non-medical exemption from immunization requirements to either complete an online educational video or obtain a signed form from their health care provider.

Many of my patients' parents tell me *"I don't know where to go for reliable immunization information."* As a result, parents with unanswered vaccine questions sometimes choose to "opt out" of vaccines.

In January 2013, I diagnosed a boy with measles here at OHSU. The following week, two unvaccinated Marion County children developed measles after exposure to my patient. Years ago, their Mother made the decision to withhold all their vaccines. She was concerned that too many vaccines might be linked to developing insulin-dependent diabetes. This is false. Oregon parents need to receive more vaccine education before choosing not to vaccinate their children.

In November 2012, I cared for a school-aged child from Bend, OR. He was unvaccinated, and developed chickenpox. When his skin rash became infected with staph bacteria, he became critically ill and was transferred by airplane to OHSU's Pediatric ICU. When I asked the Mother, *"Why didn't your children get any vaccines?"* she responded, *"I am worried about mercury. I was told it might be dangerous."* She was frustrated when I told her that mercury-containing preservatives were removed from virtually all vaccines by 2001, before her child was even born. She complained, *"I just don't know where to go for reliable vaccine information."* We discussed all her concerns about vaccine safety. While her son was still hospitalized, the Mother was already planning to get all of her children's vaccines caught up. She thanked me for the vaccine education.

Several years ago, I cared for a 12 year old girl from Southern Oregon in the OHSU Pediatric ICU with uncontrolled seizures and chickenpox. She had varicella encephalitis. I asked her Mother, *"Why didn't your daughters get the chickenpox vaccine?"* She sadly replied, *"I did not know chickenpox could do this."*

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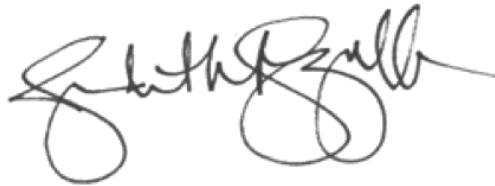
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There is a common theme in just the few examples I have shared with you. All of these parents chose to withhold vaccines, because they didn't have the education they needed to make an informed decision. Senate Bill 132 will give Oregon's parents what they deserve: The opportunity to gain reliable information about vaccine safety and the importance of immunizing our children.

Oregon immunization data shows that our schools have the highest rate of non-medical vaccine exemptions for students of kindergarten age. My experience is that many of these exemptions are because parents are lacking reliable vaccine education resources. Senate Bill 132 with help to ensure that parents make an informed decision when considering withholding immunizations for their children.

Respectfully Submitted,



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